

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ROME 00148 071350Z

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TAGS: PINT, PROP, SCUL, US, IT

SUBJ: THE BICENTENNIAL DILEMMA: CELEBRATIONS IN THE RED BELT

REF: (A) ROME A-507; (B) ROME 16767; (C) FLORENCE A-24;
(D) FLORENCE 0490

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, BICENTENNIAL PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN AT LEAST TENTATIVELY ESTABLISHED IN GENOA AND FLORENCE; BOTH CITIES WHICH HAVE FRONTIST GOVERNMENTS, AND IN THE CASE OF FLORENCE A COMMUNIST MAYOR. THE PROJECTED CELEBRATION IN GENOA HAS A RATHER AMBITIOUS PROGRAM LASTING APPROXIMATELY ONE WEEK. THE BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE IN GENOA IS A GROUP OF PRIVATE CITIZENS--WITH NO FORMAL STRUCTURE--WHICH THE CONSUL GENERAL ACTIVELY SUPPORTS. THE PROJECT BEGAN UNDER THE OLD CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN GENOA WHICH HAD PLEDGED FINANCIAL SUPPORT. COMMITTEE MEMBERS THERE ASCERTAINED THAT COMMUNIST/SOCIALIST AUTHORITIES OF THE REGION ARE PREPARED TO CONTINUE THIS SUPPORT; A MODEST DOLS 6,000.

2. IN FLORENCE THE INITIATIVE WAS TAKEN BY THE SOCIALIST HEAD OF THE TOURIST OFFICE, BUT FROM REF. D IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE COMMUNIST MAYOR WILL BE DELIGHTED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 ROME 00148 071350Z

TO COOPERATE, AND MOREOVER HOPES TO PROMOTE HIS OWN

PROJECTS.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE PROJECTS MENTIONED ABOVE, WE ANTICIPATE THAT THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF LESSER ACTIVITIES IN THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE REF BELT. OBVIOUSLY, THE EMBASSY AND THE CONSULATES HAVE NO FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THESE PROGRAMS BUT AS A MINIMUM, US OFFICIALS WILL BE EXPECTED TO ATTEND. USIS AND THE FULBRIGHT COMMISSION HAVE ALREADY IN THE CASE OF GENOA BEEN ASKED TO FACILITATE THE ATTENDANCE OF PRESTIGIOUS AMERICANS, AND MORE OF THIS MAY BE EXPECTED. IT SHOULD BE NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT A NUMBER OF AMERICANS MAY WELL PARTICIPATE ON THEIR OWN WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE US GOVERNMENT. GIVEN OUR POLICY OF OPPOSITION TO THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS' PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT AND OUR GENERAL ARM'S LENGTH RELATIONSHIP, THERE IS AN OBVIOUS CASE TO BE MADE THAT WE SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THESE ENTERPRISES. ON THE OTHER HAND, MANY OF THE ITALIANS WHO WISH TO TAKE NOTE OF OUR BICENTENNIAL ARE MOTIVATED BY A SINCERE REGARD FOR THE UNITED STATES AND THE TRADITIONAL CLOSE US-ITALIAN TIES. IF WE ARE TO IGNORE OR EVEN REPUDIATE SUCH EFFORTS, WE RUN THE RISK OF AT BEST CONFUSING AND, AT WORST, ALIENATING MANY ITALIANS WHO HAVE A SINCERE AFFECTION FOR THE UNITED STATES.

4. THE ALTERNATIVE OF PICKING AND CHOOSING AMONG CELEBRATIONS OR MANIFESTATIONS AS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS WHICH INCLUDE COMMUNISTS AND THOSE WHICH DON'T COULD EMBROIL US IN THE SWAMP OF ITALIAN LOCAL POLITICS, WHICH COULD NOT BE TO OUR BENEFIT. IT WOULD SEEM, THEN, THAT WE HAVE TWO OPTIONS: (A) TO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ANY BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION NOT DIRECTLY SPONSORED BY THE UNITED STATES, OR (B) TO ACCEPT ALL SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS GRACEFULLY, REGARDLESS OF LOCATION, IN THE BROAD SPIRIT OF PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE RELATIONS DIVORCED (AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE) FROM POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS.

5. AFTER CAREFUL REFLECTION, WE CONCLUDE THAT OPTION (B) IS MANAGEABLE AND PREFERABLE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ROME 00148 071350Z

OF OUR OVER-ALL RELATIONS. WE BELIEVE IT BEST TO HANDLE THESE AFFAIRS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MAINTAIN OUR PRESENT OPPOSITION TO THE PCI WITHOUT, AT THE SAME TIME, APPEARING TO TURN OUR BACK ON THE MILLIONS OF ITALIANS OF GOOD WILL. SHOULD IT APPEAR THAT THE ORGANIZERS OF ANY PARTICULAR BECENTENNIAL CELEBRATION INTEND TO USE IT AS AN IMPORTANT PCI PROPAGANDA VEHICLE WE CAN DEAL WITH THAT ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE BEEN CONSTANTLY

REMINDING IN TRAVELS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY THAT OUR FRIENDS DEPLORE WHAT THEY REFER TO AS THE LACK OF AN AMERICAN PRESENCE AROUND ITALY. THEY POINT TO THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS SPEND MILLIONS ANNUALLY BRINGING IN BALLET GROUPS, CHORAL GROUPS AND OTHER CULTURAL FEATURES. THE VERY EXISTENCE OF BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS WILL REINFORCE ITALIAN CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE UNITED STATES AND WHAT IT HAS MEANT TO ITALY, BOTH PHILOSOPHICALLY AND PRACTICALLY.

6. AS A SUBSIDIARY PROBLEM TO THE ABOVE, WE HAVE THE MATTER OF SISTER-CITY RELATIONSHIPS. FOR EXAMPLE, PHILADELPHIA IS A SISTER CITY OF FLORENCE AND CERTAIN ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE FROM TIME TO TIME WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK. BALTIMORE AND BOLOGNA HAVE DISCUSSED ESTABLISHING A SISTER-CITY RELATIONSHIP. THE PHILADELPHIA/FLORENCE ARRANGEMENT, OF COURSE, ANTIDATES THE ARRIVAL OF A COMMUNIST MAYOR IN FLORENCE. HE DID, HOWEVER, PROMPTLY URGE THE MAYOR OF PHILADELPHIA TO CONSIDER DEEPENING THE SISTER-CITY RELATIONSHIP VIA BECENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS. WE HAVE POINTED OUT TO REPRESENTATIVES OF BALTIMORE THE COMMUNIST CHARACTER OF BOLOGNA AND THESE WARNINGS HAVE TENDED TO DELAY OR POSTPONE ANY FORMAL ARRANGEMENT. WE HAVE STOPPED SHORT OF TRYING TO FORBID ANY LIAISON WITH COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED ITALIAN CITIES, BUT WE ARE UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE ROLE AND WOULD RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT WITH THE CITIES INVOLVED. IF THE DEPARTMENT IS PREPARED TO DO SO, WE WILL PROVIDE THE LATEST INFORMATION WE HAVE ON THE STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ANY AMERICAN CITIES AND COMMUNIST-DOMINATED ITALIAN CITIES.

7. THE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE IS REQUESTED. WE NEED IT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ROME 00148 071350Z

FAIRLY SOON AS THESE PROJECTS ARE BEGINNING TO DEVELOP. THE GENOA CELEBRATIONS ARE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN LATE MAY AND THE ONE IN FLORENCE FOR JUNE OR JULY. VOLPE

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